

Practice Tips on Accessing and Interpreting the EDGE Database

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Options for Accessing the EDGE Database

- Subscribe directly to EDGE – current annual subscription rate for law firms is \$1,000 for 5 users + \$100 for each additional user. See <http://edge.aacrao.org/info.php>; and <http://edge.aacrao.org/aacrao-edge-login-page.php?uri=/>
- Ask your credential evaluator to report what EDGE says about the beneficiary's degree(s) as part of the evaluation.
- Request a credential evaluation from AACRAO (allow for slow turnaround, e.g., 3 to 6 weeks is typical). NOTE: In some cases AACRAO may require detailed information on secondary school attendance including diplomas and transcripts which may be difficult to obtain. See <http://ies.aacrao.org/>

Tips for Interpreting the Content of EDGE

- If you have access to the EDGE database, read the Overview section for the relevant country. It provides a general description of the educational system and can be helpful in developing an understanding of the specific degrees listed. When looking at a specific credential, keep an eye out for "Credential Author's Notes," which may provide additional clarification or information. Also, EDGE may have sample documents, useful for comparison to make sure you are selecting the correct credential.
- If you work through a commercial credential evaluation service, beware of evaluations that refer to EDGE or cite to EDGE, but do not provide precise information on what EDGE says about the beneficiary's degree. Insist on seeing exactly what EDGE says about your beneficiary's degree; if your evaluator won't provide that information, find someone who will.
- EDGE may list credentials as equivalent to U.S. degrees OR as equivalent to a number of years of study in the United States at a specific level. EDGE equivalency that lists years of education, rather than U.S. degree equivalency, means that the beneficiary's degree is NOT equivalent to a U.S. degree. The following are examples of the different kinds of equivalencies listed in EDGE:
 - Example of credential listed as equivalent to U.S. degree
 - Indian Master of Engineering or Master of Technology – "represents attainment of a level of education comparable to a master's degree in the United States."
 - Example of credential listed as equivalent to years of education in the United States:
 - Danish Diplomingeniør (Diploma Engineering) – "represents attainment of a level of education comparable to 3.5 years of university in the United States."

- For any credential that is not a degree but is instead a diploma, a postgraduate diploma, or certificate, where EDGE states “represents attainment of a level of education comparable to a bachelor’s degree in the United States,” USCIS will not accept bachelor’s degree equivalency because the beneficiary’s diploma or certificate is not a degree.
 - Examples: 3 year bachelor of science degree followed by 1 year postgraduate diploma from India, or 3 year bachelor of commerce degree followed by certificate of membership in the Institute of Certified Accountants of India. Although EDGE may say that the PGD or membership “represents attainment of a level of education comparable to a bachelor’s degree in the United States,” neither the postgraduate diploma nor the ICAI membership are degrees and are therefore routinely rejected by USCIS as not being a foreign equivalent degree to a U.S. bachelor’s degree. “A level of education comparable to a bachelor’s degree” is not the same as “a foreign equivalent degree” as required by regulation.
- Careful attention should be given to combinations of education where the fields of the degrees are different.
 - Example of degrees in different fields: An Indian three-year Bachelor of Science (Biology), followed by a Master of Business Administration – EDGE says the master’s degree “represents attainment of a level of education comparable to a bachelor’s degree in the United States.” It is not clear from EDGE whether the bachelor’s equivalency would be in Biology or in Business Administration (in this case it is most likely a bachelor’s degree in business administration).
- **In ambiguous situations, requesting an equivalency evaluation from AACRAO may be an effective way to clarify the equivalency.**

Challenging EDGE

- In general, USCIS views EDGE as being objective and “peer reviewed,” and therefore routinely rejects or ignores commercially prepared credential evaluations that conflict with EDGE, even where multiple evaluations and course-by-course evaluations are submitted. USCIS regards the content of EDGE as a rebuttable presumption, so petitioners who may disagree with EDGE must rebut its contents with objective documentation, not just the opinions of other evaluators.
- If EDGE does not directly address the beneficiary’s degree, then it is most likely that USCIS would apply its default 4 year rule for bachelor’s degrees, and 6 year rule for master’s degrees. For a discussion of these default rules, see Ronald Y. Wada, *AILA’s Focus on EB2 & EB3 Degree Equivalency*, American Immigration Lawyers Association (2007). <http://aila.stores.yahoo.net/eb2andeb3.html>.
- The situation where a challenge might be successful is where EDGE provides a blanket equivalency for a degree from a particular country, and the petitioner provides documentary evidence showing that the specific degree program completed by the beneficiary is different from other similar degree programs in that country and is therefore not addressed by EDGE (e.g., EDGE is out of date, or does not include the beneficiary’s degree program). This is rare, but possible.

Recommended Reading

Ronald Y. Wada, *AILA’s Focus on EB2 & EB3 Degree Equivalency*, American Immigration Lawyers Association (2007). <http://aila.stores.yahoo.net/eb2andeb3.html>. (NOTE: a Supplement that updates the original book is scheduled for publication by AILA in 2012.)

Ronald Y. Wada, “THE Nth DEGREE – Issues and Case Studies in Degree Equivalency,” a series of articles published in *Bender’s Immigration Bulletin*, 2009-2010, including:

- 15 *Bender’s Immigr. Bull.* 1747 (December 15, 2010) (Traps and Tips for Drafting PERM Applications for Skilled Workers)

- 15 Bender's Immigr.Bull. 995 (July 15, 2010) (Testing Your Knowledge of Degree Equivalency Rules and Best Practices)
- 15 Bender's Immigr.Bull. 733 (May 15, 2010) (Working with the EDGE Database)
- 15 Bender's Immigr.Bull. 569 (Apr. 15, 2010) (Strategies for Avoiding Substantial Equivalence Issues under *Globalnet*)
- 15 Bender's Immigr.Bull. 423 (Mar. 15, 2010) (Drafting Form 9089 Job Requirements for a Typical EB3 "Safe Harbor" Case)
- 15 Bender's Immigr.Bull. 267 (Feb. 15, 2010) (Interpreting the EDGE Database)
- 15 Bender's Immigr. Bull. 75 (Jan. 15, 2010) (The Single Source Degree Rule)
- 14 Bender's Immigr. Bull. 1277 (Oct. 15, 2009) (Drafting Form 9089 Job Requirements for EB-2)

Is EB-2 an Option?
Analyzing Foreign Educational Credentials
Using the EDGE Database
April 19, 2012

Additional Resources

AACRAO: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers

<http://www.aacrao.org>

AACRAO: International Educational Services

<http://ies.aacrao.org/>

AAO Degree Equivalency Decision Withdrawn [AILA Doc No. 11022830]

<http://www.aila.org/content/default.aspx?docid=34678>